

FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES

LOCAL 35 UNITE HERE

425 College Street, New Haven, CT 06511



The Union of Service and Maintenance Employees at Yale University

**Public Hearing Testimony- Commerce Committee- March 9, 2016
Testimony on H.B. 5577- AN ACT REQUIRING THE EVALUATION OF THE COSTS
AND BENEFITS OF ESTABLISHING CERTAIN COMMERCIAL GAMING WITHIN THE
STATE OF CONNECTICUT**

Good Morning Senator Hartley, Representative Perone, and members of the Commerce Committee,

My name is Susan Valentine, and I am here today to deliver testimony on behalf of Bob Proto, the president of Local 35 UNITE HERE and Executive Board member of UNITE HERE IU.

Our members include food service workers in corporate cafeterias, airports, universities, public school districts, sports stadiums, event centers, amusement parks, cultural institutions, and national parks, as well as tens of thousands of restaurant workers inside hotels and casinos.

We are here to testify today in support of H.B. 5577- An Act Requiring the Evaluation of the Costs and Benefits of Establishing Certain Commercial Gaming Within the State of Connecticut because we believe that the state needs to have as much data as possible before making a determination on where to build our first commercial casino.

An independent study of the economic market in Connecticut will give us the whole picture when it comes to opportunity, revenue, and most importantly, jobs. Current conversations around opening a commercial casino in Connecticut have been limited to only one geographic region of the state. Without a thorough independent review, we simply don't know if we are making the best decision. An independent study, like the one contemplated by this bill, will give us the whole picture, and may in fact tell us that a different region would give us even more jobs than the proposed North Central casino would provide.

Additionally, we are skeptical that the real number of jobs provided by a casino in North Central Connecticut would be as high as claimed by its proponents. It seems that given the geographic proximity to the state's tribal casinos, opening a North Central commercial casino would further take jobs away from Mohegan Sun and Foxwoods, and would compete with them for the same market of casino visitors. Why would we want to further cannibalize our existing gaming industry? We strongly urge this committee to pass this bill so that we may get to the bottom of this and answer the question—where is the best place to build a commercial casino that will truly maximize job opportunity?

Thank you to this committee for considering H. B. 5577 today, and for listening to our testimony. We believe that building a commercial casino could be a huge opportunity for our state, but it must do the appropriate research before rushing into things. We respectfully ask you to support this bill.